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S P E E C H

Made in the

House of Commons

IN

ENGLAND,

By Sir JOHN BERNARD, one of
the Aldermen of London;

In Support of a

B I L L

For repealing the ALDERMENS Negative.

Very proper to be read at this Time, by all Citizens and
Lovers of LIBERTY and OUR CONSTITUTION.

D U B L I N :

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S P E E C H, &c.

S I R,



ALTHO' I should be sorry to gain the Hatred of my Countrymen, yet I am not so fond of popular Applause, nor so much afraid of popular Odium, as to regulate my Conduct in this House by either. I must indeed confess, that I have such an Opinion of the good Sense of my Countrymen, and have, by Experience, found them so often in the Right, that it is with the utmost Caution, and after the most mature Deliberation, I ever differ from what I find to be the Opinion of the Publick; and, I believe, it would be much better for the Nation, if our Ministers of State, as well as the Members of this House, had always the same Regard for it. With regard to the Bill now before us, whatever the Hon. Gentleman may have heard from the Citizens he has talked to upon the Subject, I can assure him, that it has been, and is now called for by the general Voice of the Citizens of *London*; but this I shall not desire him, or any other Gentleman, to take upon my Testimony, because every one may be convinced of it by the Instructions given by the Citizens to their Members at the Beginning of this very Parliament, the last Article of which is to require them to persist, with unwearied Diligence, till they should prevail in getting Laws past for restraining the exorbitant Power pretended to reside in the Court of Aldermen. As these Instructions were given by a Court of Hustings, which is a general Assembly of all the Citizens, and as they were agreed to without the least Opposition, it is an undeniable Proof, that the Citizens of *London* are generally against this Negative Voice, lodged by a late Statute, in the Court of Aldermen; and consequently, the Exercise of this Power must necessarily produce Jealousies and Discontents among the Citizens.

In this Case therefore, Sir, I have the Pleasure of finding a great Majority of my Fellow-Citizens of the same Opinion with me; for when this Negative Voice was first given to the Court of Aldermen, I was of Opinion, that it would be of dangerous Consequence to the Liberties of the City, and productive of great Jealousies, Animosities and Discontents; and in this Opinion I have since been confirmed by Experience,

ence, as well as by the Concurrence of a great Majority, I may say, of all my Fellow-Citizens who have a due Regard to the Privileges of the City, or the Liberties of their Country. In this, therefore, the Hon. Gentleman and I differ widely in Opinion; but in another Opinion I shall in Part join with him. I shall admit that Power, even a lawless Power, is grasped at, and assiduously sought after, by too many of the Human Species; but I cannot admit that either a lawless, or a constitutional Power is grasped at by all Mankind; On the contrary, I believe, most Part of Men are so low in their Circumstances, that Ambition, or the Lust of Power, never so much as once enters their Thoughts; and a great Majority of those of superior Circumstances have, I hope, as they ought, their Thoughts more taken up about guarding against lawless Power, than about the Pursuit of any constitutional Power. To all those, therefore, that do not aim at lawless Power, I must recommend the Consideration, that the Lust of Riches is as vehement, and much more general than the Lust of Power, and that this Lust of Riches has always been the best Handle that could be made use of by those who were aiming at lawless Power.

When we consider this, Sir, we shall of course find, and must conclude, that the Complaints against this Negative Voice in the Court of Aldermen do not proceed from any unreasonable Lust of Power in the Body of the Citizens of *London*, but from a most just and reasonable Apprehension, that this Negative may, by Corruption, be made use of by those who are aiming at acquiring a lawless Power over their Country, and especially over the City of *London*; and this is a Danger which we are in this Country, and particularly at this Time, much more exposed to, than we are to the Danger of our Liberties being overturned by the People's assuming to themselves a greater Extent of Power than they know how to make a proper use of. Those who have been taught and accustomed to vilipend the Knowledge, the Judgment, or the Discretion of the People in the exercise of Power, may, perhaps, think, that the Liberties of a Country may be endangered by lodging too much Power in the Hands of the People, or what we in this Country call the Commons; but this can never be the case, as long as the Nobles and the chief Families among the Commons preserve so much as the Appearance of any Virtue or publick Spirit among them. Whilst the Nobles and great Families of a Country are, or even seem to be, influenced in every Part of their publick Conduct, by Virtue, and a generous Regard for the good of their Country, the People will always entrust them with the Exercise of whatever Power may be lodged by the Constitution in their Hands, and the noble and great Families

Families will always have so much Influence upon the Minds of the People, as to prevent their giving too much Power to any one popular Leader; but when the noble and great Families throw aside even the Appearance of Virtue or publick Spirit: When, from every Part of their conduct, it appears, that none of them seek any Thing but their own private Interest, and that almost every one of them is ready upon all Occasions, and in cases of the utmost Importance, to sacrifice the publick Good to his own private Advantage: When the People find themselves oppressed with Taxes in order to pay extravagant Pensions or Salaries to the Rich and Great, or to their Relations and Favourites: When those entrusted with the Government conspire to make a private Jobb of every publick Measure: When true Merit is disregarded, and the publick Service in every Branch neglected or sacrificed, by the employing of none but such as are the Relations or Sycophants of the noble or great Families in a Country: I say, when this happens to be the case in any free country, the Nobles and great Families lose their Influence among the People, and then it becomes easy for a great popular Leader, by an Affectation of superior Virtue and publick Spirit, to persuade the People to lodge so much Power in his Hands, as to enable him to assume a sole and absolute Rule.

In such a case, Sir, the People cannot properly be said to be cheated out of their Liberties: They become, in some Measure, willing to put themselves under the Government of One they have a good Opinion of, rather than continue under the Government of the many they have a bad Opinion of, and no one can say their choice is either absurd or imprudent; for when Virtue and publick Spirit become extinct among the noble and great Families of a country, it is impossible to preserve a free Government. Their Government must deviate into an absolute Monarchy, or an absolute Oligarchy; and the first is the most eligible of the two, because a sole and absolute Monarch cannot possibly have any private Interest to pursue; he can have no Interest to pursue, but that of the Publick, and if he be a Man of any Capacity, he will always take as much care as possible, that no one under him shall sacrifice the Publick to his own private Interest: Whereas, in an absolute Oligarchy, every Man concerned in the Government has a private Interest to pursue, different, and often contrary to that of the Publick; and if any one among them should be so honest as to endeavour to prevent the publick Interest being sacrificed, either to his own, or any other private Interest, his Colleagues in Power would be alarmed at the Precedent, and, at least, would take care to render his Endeavours ineffectual; probably they would combine to get such a wrong-headed Member

dismissed

dismissed their Society, if not deprived of Life. Therefore as it is better for the People to have one Man engaged in Interest to take care of them, than to have none at all, I must conclude, that an absolute Monarchy is better than an absolute Oligarchy, and both may be established under the Form or Appearance of a free Government; for in both there may be a Dyet or Parliament chosen by the people, but the choice of that Parliament must be influenced by Corruption, and its Laws enforced by a standing Army; so that by the preserving of such an Appearance, the Government will only be rendered more oppressive upon, and more prejudicial to the Morals of the People.

From hence, Sir, it must appear, that there is no way of preserving a free Government, but by preserving Virtue and publick Spirit among the People, especially among those who are eminent for their Birth or Fortune; and that when there appears to be a general Decay of Virtue and publick Spirit, the People are in the Right to make choice of a sole and absolute Government. This, Sir, will appear to have been the Case of the *Romans*, if we read their History with due Attention; and in all the Disputes that happened between the *Patricians* and *Plebeians*, we shall generally find the latter in the Right. All the Incroachments they made upon what the *Patricians* called their Privileges, were such as they were forced to by Oppression, or such as they were intitled to by being Subjects of a free Commonwealth. Their first great Contest was about that cruel Law, which made insolvent Debtors the Slaves of their Creditors, with a Power to the latter to use them in what manner they pleased. We may judge of the cruelty of this Law from the circumstances of the Man who made the first complaint. Whilst he was fighting for his country, his Farm was plundered, his House burnt, his cattle drove away by the Enemy. Notwithstanding these misfortunes, he was obliged to pay his Assessment: This first brought him into Debt; and that Debt was so increased by Usury, that his Land was first, his Goods next, and, at last, his Person taken in Execution, by, it seems, a creditor, still more cruel than the Law. If any Man's misfortunes ever deserved compassion, surely this Man's did; but from his creditor he was so far from meeting with compassion, that after having almost starved him, he had him severely whipped, so that the marks of the Lash remained upon his Back. In this condition he made his Escape to the Market-Place, where he raised such a Spirit among the *Plebeians*, as first procured a mitigation of that cruel Law, and afterwards, the creation of those Magistrates called *Tribune of the People*, who were to protect the *Plebeians* from being oppressed by the *Patricians*. This

This Ineroachment therefore, Sir, which laid a Foundation for all the rest, was, plainly, occasioned by the Oppressions of the *Patricians*, who were generally the moneyed Men among the *Romans*; and it is surprizing to see, how tenaciously they stuck by the oppressive Power, their ancient Laws gave them over the Persons of their unfortunate Debtors. As to that relating to Marriages, it was a most invidious Distinction: A Distinction which ought not to have been introduced even under their Kings, and much less ought it to have been continued after the Establishment of their Commonwealth; therefore the *Plebeian* had a Right to insist upon its being abolished: And as to the Regulation, by which a *Plebeian* was rendered incapable of being chosen into the Consulship, or, indeed, into any other of those they called the Senatorial Magistracies, it, was, likewise, such a one as ought never to have been introduced, much less continued in what was intended as a free Commonwealth; but this I believe, was not the Intention of those who first established this Commonwealth: The Intention of *Brutus* was, I believe, to establish an Aristocracy, and this was the Reason for excluding the *Plebeians* from any Share in the Magistracy; but after his surviving Colleague had introduced an Appeal to the people, and thereby rendered them supreme even over their Senatorial Magistrates, it was ridiculous to think of supporting this Exclusion, unless they had introduced a Regulation for transferring from Time to Time, the rich and popular *Plebeians* to the Order of *Patricians*; and, indeed, it was unjust to establish it as a Rule, that no merit, no publick Service whatever, should intitle a man, or any of his Descendents, to any of the chief Dignities of the Commonwealth.

These two Ineroachments therefore, Sir, if they can be called such, the *Plebeians* had a just Title to, both from the Laws of Nature and from the Form of their Government, as amended by *Valerius Publicola*; and the violent Opposition made by the *Patricians* in these two cases, was certainly of no Service to them with regard to their Influence among the people. However their courage, Virtue, and publick Spirit, were so conspicuous in all other cases, that they continued for some Ages to have great Influence upon the people, and while they preserved that Influence, they continued to hold the chief part of the Government in their Hands; but by Degrees, and by the immense Riches they got in the Wars of *Spain*, *Africa*, *Greece*, and *Asia*, they became luxurious, avaritious, oppressive, selfish, or indolent; and as they increased in Vice, their Influence diminished, and the Licentiousness of the people increased. It was not the Increase of power that made the people grow licentious; for

when they continued *Marius* for three Years in the Consulship, they had little or no greater constitutional power than they had enjoyed from the Time that *Plebeians* were first rendered capable of being chosen Consuls, which was near 300 Years before ; and it was the Avarice and Venality of the Nobles or *Patricians*, that first set the Example of Corruption to the Commons, by which their Liberties were undone ; for both *Marius* and *Julius Cæsar* succeeded in their Sollicitations for power, chiefly by means of corruption.

Thus, Sir, it must appear, that from the *Roman* History we have a clear Proof of the Maxim I have laid down, I mean that of its being impossible to preserve a free Government, without preserving Virtue and publick Spirit among the People, especially among those that are eminent for their Birth or Fortune ; and this Maxim will be further confirmed, by considering that Part of our own History which the Hon. Gentlemen was pleased to mention. It is well known, Sir, that from the very Beginning of the Reign of King *Charles* I. such Measures were pursued by the Court as could not but give Offence to a free People ; and it is likewise well known, that many of our noble and great Families had joined in those Measures : Nay, some of them who had before been violent Opposers of such Measures, became strenuous Advocates for the Court, and made use of their Rhetorick for justifying the same Sort of Measures, as soon as they found themselves preferred to an honourable or lucrative Employment. This Behaviour lost them all Manner of Respect among the People ; and it was this that put it in the Power of some ambitious Men in the House of Commons to raise such Mobs and Tumults as put it out of the Power of the other House to make use of that Check upon the Proceedings of this Assembly, which they are intitled to by our Constitution. If our noble and rich Families had in the Beginning of that Reign and End of the former, behaved as they ought to have done, they would have preserved that Influence among the People which they were intitled to by their Birth and Fortune, and then it would not have been in the Power of the ambitious and designing Men in either House to poison the Minds of the People, or to raise any Mob or Tumult for preventing the other House's making use of their Negative in every Case where it was necessary.

The Misfortunes of that Reign, Sir, were not therefore originally owing to the People's having or getting too much Power into their Hands, but to most of our Noblemen and Gentlemen being more fond of Court Favour than of the Love or Esteem of their Country ; and the Consequence of this, if continued for any Time, will always end, as it did then,

then, in the Subversion of our Constitution. At that Time, indeed, it ended in the Subversion of our Monarchy as well as the Liberties of the People ; but I may venture to prophesy, that its next End will be in the Subversion of Liberty and Establishment of an absolute instead of a limited Monarchy ; for should the People be once generally convinced, that the only Design of Parliamentary Opposition is to recommend the Opposers to Titles or Pensions, or lucrative Places in the Government, they will certainly, and, I think, most reasonably join with the Crown in laying Parliaments entirely aside ; because Parliaments composed of such selfish Members can serve only to increase the publick Expence, without being of any publick Advantage : Nay such Parliaments must always be detrimental to the People, by rendering it necessary for the Court to squander the publick Money in Bribes and Pensions, and to wink at the publick Service being in all Cases made a Jobb of, for the private Emolument of those employed in carrying it on.

I hope, I have now shewn, Sir, that there is no Danger to be apprehended from any Power that can be lodged in the Hands of the People, as long as the noble and rich Families among them are endued with any Virtue or publick Spirit ; and that when this ceases to be the Case : When the noble and rich Families become generally selfish, corrupt and mercenary, it becomes impossible to preserve the Liberties of the People : The Government must deviate into an absolute Monarchy, or an absolute Oligarchy, the former of which I have shewn to be preferable to the latter. We have therefore nothing to fear from any Power that may be lodged in the Hands of the People, were they more generally fond of Power than they really are. But as I have said, there is another human Passion, a Passion for Riches, which is much more general among Mankind than the Love of Power. The latter affects only the Rich and Great, but the former is to be found among all Ranks of Men, and is therefore much more dangerous, especially under our Form of Government. This Passion for Riches, like all other Passions, grows every Day stronger by Indulgence, and as it cannot be indulged without an Opportunity for indulging it, we ought to take Care, that no Man possessed with this sordid Passion, shall ever find an Opportunity to indulge it at the Expence or Risk of publick Liberty.

For this End, Sir, there is no Method so effectual, as that of lodging in as many Hands as possible the Exercise of those Powers and Privileges vested in the People for the Preservation of their Liberties ; because when the Exercise of those Powers and Privileges is lodged in a great many Hands, and those

those Hands subject to frequent Changes, it becomes impossible for a Court or Minister to tempt them, by any corrupt Means, to betray the Trust committed to their Charge; whereas, when the Exercise of those Powers and Privileges is lodged in a few Hands for Life, a Minister may lay hold of that universal Passion for Riches, and much more easily prevail, by corrupt Means, in having all those Powers and Privileges betrayed and given up to him by their Guardians. To apply this to the City of *London*, and in particular to the Case now under our Consideration: The Citizens of *London* are vested with many Powers and Privileges for the preservation of their Liberties, and which have upon many Occasions been of great Service in preserving or recovering the Liberties of the people in general. The supreme Exercise of those Powers and Privileges was, before the Year 1725, lodged in the Hands of the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and Common-Council, as an aggregate Body, the Members whereof were all upon an equal Footing, and without any Distinction as to the Importance of their Vote upon any Occasion. The Lord Mayor did not vote upon any Question as Lord Mayor, nor the Aldermen as Aldermen, but all voted as Members of the Court of Common-Council, and the Vote of the meanest common-council Man was as good, and of as great Importance, in deciding the Question, as that of the Lord Mayor or the richest Alderman. As this court consists of 262 Members, whilst it remained under this Regulation, it was hardly possible for a Minister to make Use of corrupt Methods for influencing their Proceedings, or for preventing their coming to such Resolutions as were necessary for preserving their own Liberties or those of their country, especially as the Trade and Business of most of the common-council Men must always, in a great measure, depend upon the love and Esteem of their Neighbours in the city: consequently, supposing them to be governed by no Principle but Self Interest, they would not forfeit the Love and Esteem of their Neighbours, unless the Minister could give each of them a Pension for Life, equal at least to the Profits they made annually by their Business, which it will never be in the Power of any Minister to do.

This, Sir, a late Minister, whose Aim was to establish a System of corruption, was fully sensible of, and therefore he introduced, and what was more surprizing, got passed, a Law for giving a Negative to the Aldermen, so that no Question could be agreed to, or become an Act or Resolution of the City of *London*, unless approved of by a Majority of the Aldermen present. By this, 'tis true, he could not make the Common-Council do whatever he had a Mind to, but he foresaw, that by this he might be able to prevent their

their doing what he had no Mind to ; for as there are but 26 Aldermen, he knew that not only he, but every succeeding Minister, that pursued the same System, might, by Posts or Pensions secure 14 of the Aldermen in his Interest, as they are chosen for Life, and are for the most Part Gentlemen who have given over Trade, or are such whose Business does not depend upon the Favour of their Fellow-Citizens, and consequently, have nothing but Honour and Conscience to prevent their sacrificing the Interest of their City and Country to the enriching or aggrandizing themselves and Families.

To give Countenance to those who appeared as Advocates for, or Friends to this dangerous Innovation, several Arguments were then made use of ; and as those Arguments are now repeated for preventing its being repealed, I shall beg Leave to consider them, and, I hope, I shall be able to give a satisfactory Answer to each. When I say a satisfactory Answer, Sir, I mean such a one as will be satisfactory to those who did not then appear as Supporters of this Innovation ; for as to such, tho' many of them may perhaps alter their Opinion, yet I cannot expect, that many of them will be so impartial as to allow themselves to be convinced, and still fewer will be so ingenuous to own it.—The first Argument made use of, was a bold Assertion, that the giving a Negative to the Aldermen was no Innovation, because it was agreeable to the antient Constitution of the Government of the City, and was the antient Practice. For this no Proof was, or is now offered, either from the Charters, Records, or History of the City of *London* ; but it was said that it must have been so originally, because it was analogous to the constitutional Government of the Kingdom, which consists of King, Lords, and Commons, every one of which Branches has a Negative upon the other two ; from whence it was argued, that as the Government of the City of *London* consists of the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and Common-Council Men, the Aldermen at least ought to have a Negative. Does not every one see, that by this Argument the Lord Mayor ought to have a Negative as well as the Aldermen ? Consequently this Argument's good for nothing, or it goes too far, farther than even our late Minister durst venture to push it, and farther, I hope, than ever any Minister will venture to push it ; for that the late Minister would, if he durst, have pushed it so far, I make not the least Doubt, because it would have answered his Purpose much more effectually.

But, Sir, the Gentlemen who made use of this Argument do not, or will not recollect, that the Government of the City of *London* was established before our national Government took that Form in which it subsists at present, that is

to say, before our Parliament was divided into two Houses, each sitting distinct by itself, and each having a Negative upon the other. When this happened, it is not easy to determine, nor shall I enter into the Discussion of so dark a piece of History; but it is very certain, that the antient *Saxon* Parliament, or Wittenagemote, did not consist of two distinct Houses or Assemblies voting seperately, and each Assembly having a Negative; and it is as certain, that the Form of Government in the City of *London* was first established in the Time of the *Saxons*. Therefore, if we judge from Analogy, we are to suppose, that the Common-Council of the City of *London*, consists of Members who have all an equal Right of voting in that Assembly; and from their sitting all in the same Room or House, and voting, as has been hitherto the continual Custom, without any Distinction between those who are Aldermen, and those who are Common-Council Men, we must be confirmed in the Supposition, that this was the original and antient Form of Government in the City of *London*, and that it was never in this Respect altered by Custom or Statute, till the Law was made which is now proposed to be repealed.

The next Argument made use of, Sir, is founded upon the common Topick of a numerous Assembly's being always factious and seditious. This, Sir, is the Argument that has in all Ages, and upon all Occasions, been made use of by the Advocates for arbitrary Power; and has in this Country been made use of too often with Success. But this Argument can no Way be applied to the Common-Council of the City of *London*: It is not so numerous as to be subject to Faction or Sedition; because the Speakers may be plainly heard and the Votes easily collected, by which Means an End may be easily put to every Dispute that happens among them. But the whole People of the City of *London* may, it seems, run into a Frenzy or Madness, and the Common-Council Men are so much under the Influence of their Constituents, that their Proceedings must necessarily be directed by that Frenzy or Madness. I shall grant, Sir, that the Common-council Men are more under the Influence of the Citizens than the Aldermen; but if this Law continues, a Majority of the Aldermen will, I fear, be for the most Part under the Influence of our Ministers of State; and I am much more afraid of our Ministers of State falling into a Fit of Frenzy or Madness, than I am of the People of *London*'s falling into such a Fit. Besides, a City Fit of Madness, if any such Thing could happen, is neither so dangerous to the Country in general, nor so ungovernable, as a ministerial Fit of Madness. A wise and steady Man of Character and
merit

Merit may easily give a Turn or put a Stop to any popular Frenzy, as a great *Roman* Poet has beautifully told us; but few Ministers are ever governed or governable by such Men; and therefore I shall always chuse to have the City of *London* exposed to a popular rather than a ministerial Frenzy. By a ministerial Frenzy the Nation has often suffer'd, and is now suffering severely; but, I believe, no Man can shew, that ever the City of *London* suffered by any mad or frantick Spirit in the Common-Council; for even the Hon. Gentleman himself allows, that their Conduct has always been wise and steady.

This, 'tis true, he attributes to the Aldermen having a Negative Voice in all the Proceedings of the Common-Council; and makes it an Argument for proving, that the Aldermen have always been vested with this Power; but before it can serve him for this Purpose, he must shew, that before the Year 1725 the Aldermen made use of this Power, and that they made use of it to prevent some mad or imprudent Resolution that had been agreed to by a Majority of the Common-Council-Men; for unless he can do this, the Wisdom and Steadiness of the City of *London's* Conduct before the Year 1725, is a strong Argument in Favour of the Common-Council-Men, and against their being continued under those Fetters put upon them by the Law now proposed to be repealed; and as to the Conduct of the Aldermen since they had this Negative given them, whatever the Hon. Gentlemen may think of it, I am sure, it was upon several Occasions very much disliked by the greatest Part of the Citizens, and, I believe, by the greatest Part of the Kingdom. Their Conduct towards a worthy Magistrate lately decaited, whom they twice put by the Chair, when according to the Custom it was his Turn to be advanced to it, and their admitting him afterwards, without any Reason they durst own, either for their Refusal or admission, was a Proof, that their conduct was not very steady; and as to the Use they made of their Negative, I join in Opinion with most of my Fellow Citizens, that it was never necessary for them to make use of it, that they never did make a Right use of it, and that upon every Occasion their Motives for making use of it were such as they ought to have been ashamed of: I mean such as proceeded from their having a greater Regard for the Good Will of our then Prime Minister, than for the Good-Will of their Fellow-citizens, or the Interest of their City or country.

It is therefore high Time, Sir, to put an End to this Power given to the Aldermen over the Proceedings of the common council, and the last Use they made of it is a Proof of the dangerous consequence of leaving such a power

in their Hands ; for by Means of their Negative they then put a positive upon the common council, by telling them, that they should not give Thanks to their Lord Mayor, tho' justly due to him in the Opinion of every man present, unless they would agree to give Thanks in such Terms as the Aldermen pleased to direct. This is a Precedent for carrying this Negative Power much farther than was intended by the Legislature, whatever might be the Intention of the Minister who got that Law passed ; and as nothing is more improvable than a bad Precedent, they may by some new Improvements be able to assume to themselves and their Patron, the Prime Minister for the Time being, the absolute Management of the city of *London*, which would contribute not a little towards throwing into his Hands the absolute management of the whole Kingdom, as must appear evident to every one who considers, what an Influence the citizens of *London*, must always have in Elections of Members of Parliament through the whole Kingdom, and how dangerous it would be for any citizen to fall out with the court, if it had the absolute management of the city.

To pretend, Sir, that this Negative in the Aldermen has not raised Jealousies and Animosities in the City, is to argue against the most notorious Fact, as well as against the clearest Demonstration. We may as well say, that to tie a Man Neck and Heels can raise in his Breast no Animosity, as to say, that to subject, by an express Law, the Resolutions of the Citizens of *London* to the Opinion of 14 Aldermen, can raise no Animosity or Heartburnings amongst them. Sir, if these 14 Aldermen were all Men of the greatest as well as most unblemished Character, the Citizens could not take it well to be tied down by Law to their Opinion ; but surely, they must be filled with the highest Indignation, when they find themselves obliged to submit to the Opinion of fourteen Men, whose Wisdom or Integrity, they think, they have great Reason to suspect. I shall admit, Sir, that the Aldermen have generally a greater Stake in the City, and are better Judges of its true Interest than most of the Common Council Men, and I know, that before they had this Negative Voice given them, their Opinion had always great Weight in the Common-Council ; but since that time, the Credit of most of them has been so much impaired, or at least was so till very lately, that tho' they had a Power to compel, they had no Power to persuade ; for which a very natural Reason may be given, because those that have a Power to compel will never be at the Pains to persuade, and those that are to be persuaded, always hear with Prejudice the Reasons offered by those that have a Power to compel.

In order therefore, Sir, to restore the Credit of the Aldermen in the Common Council, this compulsive Power ought to be abolished, that those worthy Gentlemen may be restored to their persuasive Power, by which alone they governed, I may say, the Common-Council for many Ages, and always kept them from running into any sedition or Licentiousness in the Common-Council, by vesting or continuing a Negative in the Aldermen, is something like endeavouring to prevent Mobs and Riots among the People by a numerous Standing Army and a severe Riot Act. By the latter you may, indeed, prevent Mobs and Riots among the People; but if this Method be continued for any long Time, you will make your Ministers Tyrants and your People Slaves: And by the former you may, 'tis true prevent Sedition and Licentiousness in the Common-Council; but if continued for any Time, you will make the Aldermen corrupt Dependents upon the Minister for the Time being, and the Common-Council, or rather the City of *London* insignificant, with regard to that for which it has been always famous, and by which it has often gained great Honour: I mean that of being a check upon the conduct of our Administration, and ready to give the Alarm to the People, when any dark Designs were formed against their Liberties, or such Measures pursued as were destructive to our commerce, Manufactures, or Navigation. And if the City of *London* should be, by the corrupt Negative of 14 of its Aldermen, bound up in such Chains, as to prevent its petitioning against such Designs or such Measures, I should be glad to know, what City or Community in the Kingdom durst, or could, with equal Weight, represent the dangerous Consequence of them, either to King or Parliament? Would not the Silence of the City of *London* be an Example for all the other Communities in the Kingdom? and would not that general Silence be represented by our Ministers, as an Approbation of their Designs, however dangerous, of their Measures, however destructive?

It has been said, Sir, that the Aldermen would not venture to put a Negative upon any popular Proposition made in the Common-council, because they all live in the City, and would run the Risk of being *De-Witted* by an enraged Populace. Alas! Sir, we know how the populace of this Kingdom have been of late bridled by Standing Armies, Riot Acts, and Ministerial Slaves, called Justices of the peace. If a Man has the prime Minister for his protector, he has but little to fear from an enraged Populace. Besides, there are many of the Aldermen that do not live in the City; so that when they are in their own Houses at the Court End of the Town,

Town, and in the Middle of the Guards, they are in no Danger of a City Mob; and when they come into the City, they are there themselves the Justices of the peace, and would certainly read the Riot Act to any crowd of people that should but seem to attack them, after which the Guards would be sent for, and the Mob dispersed, perhaps many of them killed, before the Aldermen could be in any Danger. This could therefore have but little Effect in preventing the Aldermen from putting a Negative upon the most popular proposition; and suppose their Danger much greater than it is, there is nothing I am more afraid of than that some Negative Alderman should be massacred by a Mob in the City. I know how tempting a pension or a Bribe is to some Men, so tempting that they will run any Risk to come at it: I likewise know the violent Spirit of my Countrymen, so violent that for the pleasure of being revenged, many of them will rush upon certain Death. This may some Time or other occasion a Negative Alderman to be *De-Witted* by a sudden Tumult; but what would be the Consequence? It would furnish a wicked Minister with a pretence for introducing an armed Force into this City, and perhaps, for making it forfeit its Charter. With me therefore, this Danger is a strong Argument for preventing any of my Brother Aldermen from being led into such a Temptation, and for preventing my Fellow-Citizens from being work'd up to such a Rage.

I think, I have now answered all the Arguments that were ever brought in Favour of this Negative Voice in the Aldermen, except that trifling one drawn from the Style of the Acts, Orders, or Resolutions of the Common-Council. The Aldermen, it is said, must have a Negative, because the Words of the Acts, Orders, or Resolutions of the Common-Council are, *Be it enacted*, or, *It is resolved*, by the Right Hon. the Lord Mayor, the Right Worshipful the Aldermen, and the Commons, in the Common-Council assembled. This, Sir, is so puerile, it hardly deserves an Answer. By the same Way of Reasoning, the Lord Mayor ought to have a Negative in the Common-Council; and the Bishops ought to have a Negative in the other House of Parliament, because in the Acts of the Common-Council, the Lord Mayor is as particularly named as the Aldermen; and in our late Acts of Parliament, it is always said, *Be it enacted by the King's most excellent Majesty, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal*. A case may happen in the common-Council wherein the Lord Mayor declares himself against what is agreed to by the Majority of the Aldermen, as well as the Majority of the Common-council Men:
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Would it not be as ridiculous, in such a case, to say, *Be it enacted by the Right Hon. the Lord Mayor*, as it would be to say, *Be it enacted by the Right Hon. the Lord Mayor, and the Right Worshipful the Aldermen*, in a case where all the Aldermen declare against the Resolution of the Majority of the common-council? In like Manner, a case may happen, nay, a case did lately happen, in the other House, where all the Bishops declared against what was agreed to by the Majority, and I remember, a noble Lord wittily proposed, that the Lords Spiritual should be left out of the Preamble to the Bill, but no one thought he was serious, and accordingly in that Act, as in all others, it is said, *Be it enacted by the King's most excellent Majesty, by and with the Consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal*. In all cases where the Majority is to determine, the Determinations of the Majority makes it the act of the whole Assembly, and consequently of every Man and every Body of Men, who are Members of that Assembly; therefore it may be properly said *Be it enacted*, even by those who declared themselves against it; because when we speak of a collective Body's enacting or Resolving upon any Thing, we always mean the Majority of that collective Body; otherwise we could never say, that any Thing is ordered or resolved on by a collective Body, except when it is agreed to *Nemine contradicente*.

I shall conclude, Sir, with returning my Thanks to the Hon. Gentleman, for the good Opinion he has of the Judgment as well as Integrity of our City Aldermen. He was pleased to tell us, that he should not believe any Proposition to be for the Advantage or Benefit of the City, if fourteen Aldermen declared against it. I should perhaps, be of his Opinion, if there were no Place, Pension or ministerial Bribe in the Way; but when a Salary or Pension of 1000*l.* a Year, or a valuable Bank-Note is thrown in the Way of a covetous or expensive Alderman, if it does not warp his Integrity, it may bias his Judgment, or so blind his Understanding as to prevent his seeing the most evident Advantage that may accrue to the city from a Proposition's being agreed to, which our Prime-Minister, for the Time being, has declared himself against. Therefore, if the Bill now before us be rejected, and the Aldermens Negative continued, I hope, this House will be so good as to allow the city a Place-Bill, and as effectual a Pension Bill as can be contrived, for incapacitating every Alderman that shall accept of Place, Pension, or Bribe from the crown, and for choosing a new one in his stead. If this were done, Sir, I should be much more easy about the Aldermens Negative than I am at present; and till this is done, I shall be for abolishing their Negative, and restoring the city to its antient constitution.

